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ABSTRACT

Modifications to an existing secondary school foreign language program in Arlington County, Virginia, are described that were developed when the middle school program began in September, 1990, and sixth graders were incorporated into the foreign language program. Lessons were tested in an alternative school prior to adoption in the middle schools. Content-based units were developed in the following core areas: social studies (Egypt, immigration, home and neighborhood); science (plants, the bee, boats, heart and blood circulation, human cell); and fine arts (painting). Extensive hands-on experience was also incorporated into lessons. For each lesson plan, goals, content objectives, language objectives, activities, grammar, vocabulary, and materials were identified. Difficulties arose in locating authentic source materials and in learning how to make a lesson manageable for the students. Evaluation questions are noted (e.g., middle school/high school articulation, questions of credit, parent reactions), and the lesson plans for the units on the bee and immigration are included in this report. Contains 9 references. (LB)

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A CONTENT-BASED PROGRAM FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL: GETTING STARTED

by Jim Senn

Arlington County, Virginia instituted the middle school program in September 1990. With sixth graders now included in the foreign language program, it was necessary to rethink the existing secondary school foreign language program and adjust it to meet the needs of the younger child.

At H-B Woodlawn, the alternative secondary school in the county, work began early enough to "test" lessons on students before the middle school program arrived. Trying to match a foreign language program to a middle school pupil and create a meaningful and memorable experience in second language learning was exciting. After extensive research and course work in both middle schools and second language acquisition, it was time to begin the task of matching a foreign language program to a middle school child.

One of the first tasks was to identify what units the core teachers were going to teach these children. Core areas at H-B Woodlawn are English, Social Studies, Math, Reading, and Science. It was propitious to attach foreign language to the core program for several reasons. Core teachers needed to see foreign language learning as something complementary to the basic subjects. In addition to reinforcing knowledge of the content in science, social studies, mathematics, etc., foreign language study would help students develop and practice basic skills.

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Second, it was necessary for the foreign language to be a vehicle through which a child could review and enhance what he was already studying in core. Not only would the material be already familiar to the student, but he/she would see that language had a purpose and was useful. Could it be possible to make foreign language indispensable to the core program? In a time of budget cuts and back to basics, studying a second language had to prove itself.

Several content-based units were then developed holding to the belief that teaching foreign language through content areas would 1) approach language as communicating information rather than studying language for language sake; 2) reinforce what is already familiar in the subject areas; 3) give a functional character and meaning to the use of a foreign language; 4) instill and maintain interest in studying a language; and 5) utilize a holistic, natural approach to language learning and acquisition.

For the first year of middle school foreign language, nine units were prepared from the following core areas:

Social Studies:	Egypt Immigration Home and Neighborhood
Science:	Plants The Bee Boats Heart and Blood Circulation Human Cell
Fine Arts:	Painting

Sixth graders needed extensive hands-on experience so lesson plans were developed that contained activities that would emphasize the language being taught. These activities include 1) modeling larvae out of clay to place in honeycombs; 2) labeling and describing verbally the life-cycle of the honeybee; 3) drawing the American flag and discussing the meaning of the stars and stripes; 4) and creating a walk-through heart to act out blood circulation. Only the target language was used in the classroom and total physical response was utilized to get across meaning.

For each lesson plan, goals, content objectives, language objectives, activities, grammar, vocabulary and materials identified. The time frame averaged from three to four weeks in order to complete a unit. The content dictated the grammar and vocabulary. Following are two examples of lesson plans for the first-year program.

Lesson Plan

SUBJECT: Science

TOPIC: Insects

SUB-TOPIC: The Bee

GOAL: To teach foreign language through a familiar concept already presented in the Science curriculum.

CONTENT OBJECTIVES: Students will learn about the physical structure of the bee, its social aspects and food production.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVES: Students will

1. learn vocabulary related to physical, social, and food production aspects of the bee;
2. form simple sentences;
3. practice present tense of verbs;
4. understand spoken language

ACTIVITIES:

1. Describe, using appropriate vocabulary, the physical structure of the bee by
   a. practicing with charts of bee parts;
   b. create and assemble a puzzle of parts (large group);
   c. draw and label parts (small group)
2. Describe the social aspects of the bee creating a honeycomb/hive with papier machier -- larva/bees/cells/honey.
3. Describe the process by which food is obtained and produced. We will dramatize the process by assigning individuals roles with signs and sentences.
4. Tour each other's classes.
5. Test on The Bee.

OUTCOME:

1. Students individually give oral presentation on parts of lesson to check speaking ability, then to check student comprehension, a test on information will be given.
2. Students take notes in target language (writing).
3. Students will read summary information on bees.

GRAMMAR: Present tense verbs

VOCABULARY

La Structure:	**La Société:**	**La Production:**
la tête	la ruche	la nymphe
le thorax	la reine	la larve
les antennes	l'ouvrière	le miel
les ailes	le pollen	nourrit
l'abdomen	le mâle	pique
les pattes	l'essaim	
l'oeil composé	la cire	
l'oeil simple	le rayon de miel	
la langue	la colonie	
a	l'alvéole	
l'aiguillon	travaille	
	suce	
	pourvoit	
	récolte	
	entrepose	
	construit	
	pond	
	protège	
	produit	
	forment	
	volent	

La Estructura:	**La Sociedad:**	**La Producción:**
la cabeza	la colonia	la ninfa
el tórax	la reina	la larva
el abdomen	el zángano	la miel
la pata	la obrera	pica
la antena	la colmena	da de comer
el aguijón	el enjambre	
el ala	el panal	
la lengua	los huevos	
el ojo compuesto	la celdilla	
el ojo simple	el polen	
tiene	la celdilla	
chupa	la cera	
	trabaja	
	protege	
	forman	
	produce	
	vuelan	
	construye	
	recoge	

MATERIALS: Construction paper, markers, glue, scissors, fasteners, honey, cardboard, clay (play dough), 5 x 8 cards, metal fasteners, tape

TIME: 3 weeks

LESSON PLAN

SUBJECT: American Studies

TOPIC: Immigration "E pluribus unum"

SUB-TOPIC: Melting Pot

GOAL: To teach students foreign language through a familiar concept already presented in the Social Studies curriculum.

OBJECTIVES: Using the target language students will be able to

Day I:

Countries & nationalities -- map of Europe, Latin America, and Africa

Activities:

1. Construct an illustrated time line from past to present (show contributions) of immigrants.

2. Make photographic exhibits of neighborhood.

Day II:

Graph who came to America and why -- dates of arrival of big groups and reasons (with Graph I)

Day III & IV:

Activities:

1. Write diary:

   a. reason for leaving; packing; who you are

   b. boat trip

   c. Arrival in America -- Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty; where you settle

2. Demonstrate what immigrant contributed to the U.S.

3. Interview students/parents/grandparents about their experience and fill out answers to questions in target language.

4. Illustrate/build an example of architectural contribution/or create exhibit of contributions.

5. Learn song/dance and perform

6. Bring in a dish and recipe/or

7. Make a handicraft that is representative of one of these groups.

Day V, VI, VII:

Illustrate (draw out), in comic-book form, the diary entries, with captions below.

Day VIII:

Write play -- arrival at Ellis, passing various stations.

OUTCOME: Listen and understand an oral history presented by teacher. (Listening comprehension activity to follow.)

Students have open house, living museum and invite especially Social Studies classes to view activities from above, i.e., diary, songs, etc.

GRAMMAR:
- I have to
- I am going to
- age
- I can + infinitive
- I need + infinitive
- to be
- to have
- to need
- I'm hungry
- question
- negatives

TIME: Introductory lesson -- 3 periods/week, 3-4 weeks

VOCABULARY

Verbs	Nouns	Adjectives
preparo	la maleta	política
pongo	el billete	religiosa
compro	en barco/avión	
viajo	la libertad	
llego	Centro América	
deseo	Segunda Guerra Mundial	
tengo	Depresión	
necesito	exceso de población	
puedo	hambre	
voy a		
soy de		

VOCABULARY

Verbs	Nouns	Adjectives
prépare	la valise	politique
je mets	le billet	religieux
j'achète	en avion/bateau	
je voyage	la liberté	
j'arrive	l'Amérique Centrale	
je veux	la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale	
j'ai	la Dépression	
j'ai besoin de	la surpopulation	
je peux	la faim	
je vais a		
je suis de		

NATIONALITIES & COUNTRIES

Amérique	américain
Mexique	mexicain
Espagne	espagnol
Canada	canadien
Russie	russe
France	français
Hongrie	hongrois
Suède	suédois
Pologne	polonais
Chine	chinois
Irlande	irlandais
Allemagne	allemand
Hollande/Pays Bas	holandais
Angleterre	anglais
Cuba	cubain
Italie	italien
El Savador	salvadorien
Afrique	africain
Europe	european
Suisse	suisse
Luxembourg	luxembourgeois
Belgique	belge
Yougoslavie	yougoslave
Roumanie	roumain
Bulgarie	bulgare
Grèce	grec

NATIONALITIES & COUNTRIES

América	americano
México	mexicano
Espana	español
Canadá	canadiense
Rusia	ruso
Francia	francés
Hungria	húngaro
Suecia	sueco
Polonia	polaco
China	chino
Irlanda	irlandés
Alemania	alemán
Holanda	holandés
Inglaterra	inglés
Cuba	cubano
Italia	italiano
El Salvador	salvadoreño
Africa	africano(a)
Europa	europeo(a)
Suiza	suizo(a)
Luxemburgo	luxemburgués
Bélgica	belga
Yugoslavia	yugoslavo
Rumania	rumano
Bulgaria	búlgaro
Grecia	griego

Since the content-based program is not grammatically sequenced (as in a textbook), it is often assumed erroneously that grammar is not taught. Nothing could be farther from the truth. A grammar objective is stated for each unit and worksheets are prepared to practice this objective. The difference is that grammar is drawn from the content. Students practice the grammar orally followed by written exercises. Consequently, a grammatical point that is found at the end of the text for a second-year class may very well be taught during a lesson for first-year students.

One example of this issue is found in the geography unit of North America, which is currently being tested during the second-year-pilot program. An activity involves making a flour paste relief map of the United States. Specific directions are given in the formal imperative. In order to accomplish the objective students must study how to form formal commands.

There were two important elements to deal with in preparation for the program. One was finding authentic source material in the various subject areas; the other was breaking down the information in small comprehensive units. Since Arlington is a diverse community ethnically, there were many sources for texts in Spanish. French was another matter. Fortunately, the planning for the program coincided with a summer study program in France for the author, and materials were acquired at that time for the French component.

The greatest challenge was in knowing what to include in a lesson and how to make it manageable for the students. For instance, in a unit on "Light," which can be quite complicated when dealing with the wave concept, what a photon is, and how energy is released, the lesson was limited to four areas: What is Light? Color, Refraction, and How We See. To present the first section, "What is Light?" it is necessary to draw and act out the concept of the atom and its orbits, while the students write down what they see on the blackboard. By taking individual words, then linking them together with simple verbs, the students slowly learn to construct sentences.

A second-year program is currently in process. The lessons encompass the following areas: math (geometry); English (Aesop's Fables); geography (topography of North American and place names; Latin America and its influence in Arlington, and international tourist information/travel); science (light and matter), social studies (westward movement/gold rush and African colonies); and physical education (soccer/volleyball).

In evaluating this program, there are several questions to consider. One of the most important is that of articulation. Where exactly do these students fit into a high school program? Since H-B Woodlawn is a small school encompassing grades six through twelve there is not a problem of trying to "place" the student into a more traditional program based on prescribed units covered in a textbook.

Flexible scheduling permits placing students in levels where they can best succeed. However, since these students have class three times a week during middle school, the

question of credit is of some concern. Do two years equal one high school year as far as credit is concerned? If a student feeds into a level two or three, and grammar is not sequenced, what would be lacking in the students preparation for that level? what about vocabulary? The vocabulary of these students reflects their content-based units and not what is found in the county's texts.

Also of interest was the reaction of some parents during the first year. Generally there was great acceptance. However, there were instances of confusion on the part of some. They could not understand why a book was not being used (there were none for the county at the time for the sixth graders) nor could they understand why students were learning about bees. Needless to say, it was necessary to explain the intent of the program and the present day philosophy of second language acquisition. Even some students came into the program with preconceived ideas of what they should be doing in a foreign language classroom.

The goal of H-B Woodlawn's foreign language program for the middle school as well as for the high school, is proficiency in the second language based on stated goals. Future efforts are directed towards creating evaluation of a student's language ability after each year of study. Foremost in the minds of the teachers, however, is the desire to provide an interesting program that is relevant to the middle school child's studies, needs and abilities. Input has to be comprehensible and instruction has to imitate natural language learning. By creating a mini-immersion setting using thematic units it is believed that any child can enjoy his/her experience while moving toward proficiency.

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